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# HEA Teaching and Learning Conference December 2025

Leading Change Together: Building the Future of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education



## Academic Advising Initiative



<b>Institution(s) and Partner Organisations Involved</b>	UCD Teaching & Learning
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<b>What level(s) of your institution does this work affect?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional level</li> </ul>
<b>Date and Timeframe</b>	2021-2026
<b>Alignment and Focus</b>	<p><b>Focus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital Transformation in the Tertiary Sector</li> </ul> <p><b>Frameworks, Policies, or Strategies Aligned</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breaking Boundaries: UCD Strategy to 2030</li> <li>EU Digital Education Action Plan</li> </ul> <p><b>Discipline</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary</li> <li>Arts and Humanities</li> <li>Business, Administration and Law</li> <li>Education</li> <li>Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction</li> <li>Generic programmes and qualifications</li> <li>Health and Welfare</li> <li>Information and Communication Technologies</li> <li>Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics</li> <li>Social Sciences, Journalism and Information</li> <li>Teaching and Learning</li> </ul>

### Impact, Lessons Learned and Future Directions

#### Impact and Evidence of Success

The first year of the pilot from September 2024 to May 2025 included over 1000 students and over 160 staff. Focus groups were held with students, academic advisors and senior academic advisors after the first year of the pilot. Each of the pilot schools outlined their approaches to academic advising in case study format. Experience and lessons learned were gathered and reported on to the Academic Advising Working Group, the University Teaching and Learning Committee and the University Management Team Education Group. The second year of the pilot includes approximately 2220 students and 350 staff.

#### Future Plans and Sustainability

A number of areas for emphasis have come to the fore throughout the first year of the pilot and from the focus groups, these include:

- Continued review and enhancement of the academic advising IT systems.
- Improving student engagement with academic advising.
- Refining local academic advising approaches taking on board lessons learned from the first year of the pilot.
- Refining professional development resources and training materials.
- Increased institutional focus on academic advising.
- Broadening the rollout of academic advising to additional schools. There will be further work to promote information about the academic advising initiative and to support schools that would like to become involved.

#### Top Tips

- Academic advisors should approach students to organise meetings as many students are reluctant to initiate this.
- Although group meetings can be beneficial, students find personalised one-to-one meetings most beneficial.
- Students particularly value having a single point of contact.

Six Principles of Academic Advising

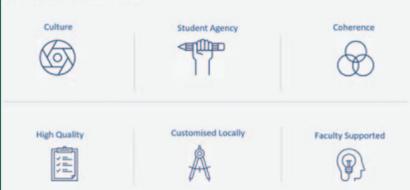
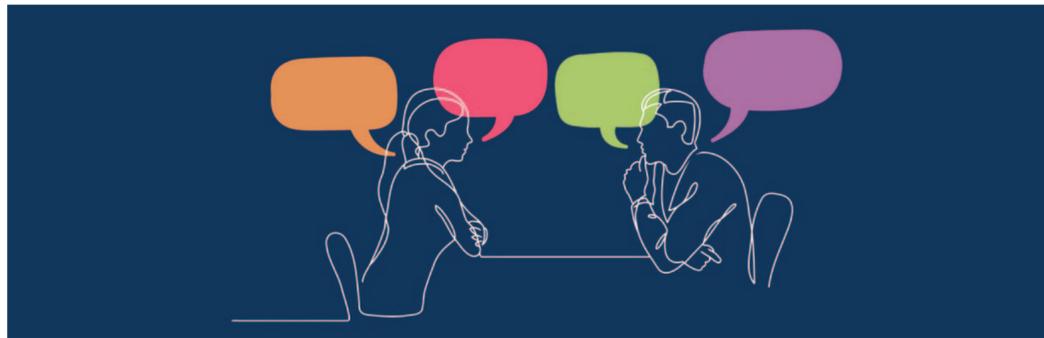


Table 1. Overview of Students and Academic Advisors by School: Year One of Pilot

Pilot School	Stages	Academic Advisors	Students	Average Students per Academic Advisor
Biomolecular and Biomedical Science	3 & 4	39	324	8
Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore	1	14	25	2
Law	1	94	370	11
Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems	1	58	264	5
Psychology	1	22	96	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>167</b>	<b>1079</b>	<b>6</b>

Data as per 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025



### Initiative Description

#### Aims and Objectives

- Improve the educational experience of students on taught programmes enabling them to better navigate their programme, learn more effectively and reach their full academic potential.
- Deliver an IT system to support common processes for Academic Advising enabling a more effective and efficient use of time for students, faculty and staff.
- Deliver an improved experience for all stakeholders in line with the UCD Principles of Academic Advising: Culture, Student Agency, Coherence, High Quality, Customised Locally and Faculty Supported.

#### Outline or Description

An Academic Advising Working group was established in 2021 to inform university wide policy on academic advising. A definition, objectives and principles of academic advising were developed and subsequently approved. A literature review was produced and a university-wide consultation was conducted to capture the perspectives and experiences of students and faculty. Different approaches to academic advising were piloted in the form of seventeen learning enhancement projects across the University. A technology sub-group reported that a system for allocating students to academic advisors would be essential for scaling academic advising at UCD and that it would not be tenable to do allocations of students to academic advisors manually. It was also agreed that a system to support the interactions between the student and the academic advisor would add real value.

A second consultation took place in 2023. The consultation was hugely beneficial in building a picture of academic advising in UCD from a Head of School perspective, in terms of broad understandings of academic advising, the extent to which it is in place, the reality and complexity around school configurations and workload allocation, the challenge of student engagement, the values and aspirations in terms of supporting students in a way that is equitable and manageable for staff and the supports needed in order to provide formal academic advising.

An in-house system was developed to allocate students to academic advisors. Students are first allocated to schools and then students are allocated to academic advisors. The system is largely automated with the option for schools to make any changes that they choose.

Connected to this a new IT system (e2s) was purchased and implemented to streamline academic advising processes. Training and resources were provided and ongoing support and development of the IT system continues.

The Academic Advising System (e2s) provides the following benefits:

- Students can easily see who their dedicated academic advisor is, along with a photo and contact details.
- Students can easily contact their academic advisor via the "Connect me" button.
- Messaging allows both students and advisors to maintain a clear communication thread.
- Academic advisors can easily see their allocated students and can quickly contact them via the system without having to look up the student contact details elsewhere.
- The appointments feature saves scheduling time as students can self-serve to book, rebook, or cancel slots ring-fenced by academic advisors.
- The e2s system supports the objectives of academic advising through use of student reflections and educational plans.

Starting in September 2024, academic advising was piloted in five schools across the university, supported by the new system. Initial feedback from students, academic advisors and administrative staff in the pilot schools has been positive with all five schools continuing with the pilot for a second year and four expanding it to include stage two students.

Students were very positive about academic advising, they saw its benefits and would recommend it to others. They reported feeling more comfortable and confident, especially during the transition to university. They said that academic advisors guided them academically, helped them to understand expectations and assisted them with problems. They felt supported.

Whilst there were challenges in relation to workload and the introduction of a new system, academic advisors agreed that students, particularly first years, can benefit from one-to-one contact with an academic. The meaningful impact of academic advising, particularly for engaged students and the potential of academic advising to improve student retention and progression were acknowledged.

### Funding & Acknowledgements Details

The Academic Advising Initiative is funded by the HEA via the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement in Higher Education Fund.